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POLICE PLANNING DURING A COVID-19 PANDEMIC

15 April 2020

GUIDANCE NOTE

POLICE PLANNING DURING A COVID-19 PANDEMIC



This document provides a synopsis of the factors that a police agency must consider when writing plans to address operations during the COVID-19 pandemic.¹ It is meant to be generic and relevant to different contexts and countries all over the world.

OVERVIEW

Introduction

General Considerations

Essential aspects that police officials should think about before, during and after the planning process.

External Measures

Important measures necessary to build coordination mechanisms with other agencies and to consider while enforcing health emergency orders.

Internal Measures

Critical actions to ensure the safety of police staff and their families and to guarantee the services continuity with a gender approach.

¹ Material extracted with sincere thanks and gratitude to the Police Executive Research Forum and its authors: Andrea M. Luna, Corina Solé Brito and Elizabeth A. Sanberg, (October 2007) Police Planning for an Influenza Pandemic: Case Studies and Recommendations from the Field, Police Executive Research Forum, Washington, D.C. 20036.



INTRODUCTION

1. Police agencies all over the world are facing unprecedented challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic. These challenges are at the same time related to the complexity and the large scale of the activities that the police are asked to perform and to the changing nature of the police role during the pandemic.

2. Although health workers are in the frontline, the police should be involved in every stage of the response and remain the main interface with the population to answer their questions and solve their problems. Police services are overwhelmed by extra missions due to the emergency: enforcing public health orders, including quarantines or travel restrictions, securing health care facilities, controlling crowds, assisting with handling mass fatalities, protecting national stockpiles of vaccines or other medicines and even public education and risk communication.

3. The coordination of the response is not spontaneous as the police may not have previously worked with most of the agencies with who they should coordinate their response plan, including public health, medical officials and other critical infrastructures providers, such as telecommunications, power and water. Moreover, the use of the military to enforce the emergency measures in many countries brings challenges concerning the relationship between the police and the military in terms of jurisdiction and responsibility.

4. While the role of the police during security threats and emergencies is generally well defined, it is far from clear during a COVID-19

 **Together, we can and must prevent violence everywhere, from war zones to people's homes, as we work to beat COVID-19** *António Guterres, UN Secretary-General, April 2020* 

pandemic, adding another layer to the complexity of the police response. Actually, unlike public health services, most of the national response plans to COVID-19 don't consider the role of the police or only make a little mention of it in wide and general terms. Generally, it is mentioned that, in addition to the usual duties, the police have a role in supporting the fight against the disease and protecting people from contamination. This secondary role attributed to the police can also be seen in the additional financial and other types of support reserved to the police by the government as compared to other agencies, particularly those working on the health response.

5. The role of the police also changes as the context of the pandemic changes and the needs of the population and the government evolve. For example, the judiciary courts can prioritize certain cases at the expense of others according to the situation, which will impact police decisions about offences that should be

prosecuted and the files that should be investigated.

6. The needs of the police staff and the capacity of the organization can also change during the pandemic as they and their families can be hit by the pandemic, at least in the same proportion as the rest of the population.

7. Therefore, planning the police response to COVID-19 is extremely important to address evolving issues related to the preparedness, the response and the recovery from the pandemic. The importance of the planning lies also in the reputational risks that the police can potentially have during the response to the pandemic, knowing that the measures taken today would impact the future relationship between the police and the population after the pandemic.

8. The police should also look to the non-harmful effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and prepare its response to better position itself and enhance its service to the population. The police should consider the windows of opportunities that can be opened during the pandemic at the political and social levels to introduce some critical reforms, such as the digital transformation of the police management and innovation in investigation procedures, that can sustainably and positively impact the development of the police, once the pandemic is safely behind us.

KAALAMAN UKOL SA COVID-19

ANO ANG COVID-19 (Novel Coronavirus Disease)?
 ITO AY ISANG MAKAKAHAWANG SAKIT NA SANHI NG BAGONG CORONAVIRUS NA NGAYON PALANG NAKITA SA MGA TAO. ANG PANGUNAHANG METHOD OF TRANSMISSION AY DROPLETS MULA SA TAO NG MAY SAKIT KAPAG SIYA AY UMUBO, HUMATSI NG O NAGSALITA.

ANO ANG MGA DAPAT GAWIN?
 Kung tsek sa lahat ng sintomas na ito, huwag mag atubili na sundin ang mga sumusunod:

1. Sabihin ang pinaghihihinalang may sakit na i-isolate muna ang kanyang sarili, pag suotin ng surgical mask.
2. I-report sa Baliwag Hotline: 0917-505-7827 ang insidente para sa koordinasyon.
3. Kung kinakailangang ma-ospital ang pasyente, dapat siyang dalhin ng kinauukulan sa pinaka malapit na level 2-3 na ospital na may sapat na pasilidad para sa COVID-19.

BALIWAG HOTLINE: 0917-505-7827 (STAR)

Kung galing sa mga bansa na affected ng covid at wala naman sintomas, makipag-ugnayan sa Barangay Hall o sa mga Health Centers na malapit sa inyo para makapag self quarantine

PAANO MAIIWASAN ANG COVID-19?

- Umiwas sa mataong lugar
- Magsuot ng surgical mask kung kinakailangan
- Palaging linisin ang mga gamit lalo na sa paligid ng taong nakitaan ng sintomas
- Obserbahan ang sarili para sa mga sintomas
- Maghugas ng kamay lalo na pagkatapos magbanyo o hawakan ang alagang hayop
- Siguraduhing malinis at maayos ang pakakaluto ng inyong pagkain

PAGHUHUGAS NG KAMAY

- Gumamit ng malinis na tubig
- Isara ang gripo at sabunin ang kamay
- Kuskusin maigi ang bawat bahagi ng kamay: likod, palad, pagitan ng daliri ng hindi baba sa 20 segundo
- Gumamit ng tisyu upang tuyuin ang kamay, gamitin ito pang sara ng gripo
- Itapon ang ginamit na tisyu sa tamang tapunan

DUGONG BALIWAG PUSONG BALIWAG

Yes! ITO ANG BALIWAG CITY

Baliwag, Philippine /photo Judgefloro @Wikimedia

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

9. Start by gaining a thorough understanding of the threat. Before drafting protocols, it is imperative that those who are responsible for the police-related planning have a thorough understanding of the threat, including the impact the COVID-19 pandemic may have on the community and on the police agency's ability to function. Understanding the threat and the issues that will arise will help police officials to accurately assess the planning components and resources needed, as well as to anticipate how a COVID-19 pandemic may change the policing environment and the agency's priorities.

10. Look for outside resources and promising approaches in other departments. Very few local policing agencies have completed comprehensive plans for a COVID-19 pandemic, but as more police agencies begin to move forward in the planning process, they may develop resources and planning guidance that will prove useful to other agencies' planning processes. Internet search engines also can be useful in finding the most up-to-date information and in identifying police and other law enforcement agencies that have developed plans.

11. Set realistic expectations of the police role in a pandemic COVID-19 scenario. In writing police plans, be very clear about the ability of

the agency to assist other agencies during a COVID-19 pandemic. In any large-scale emergency, police resources (and the resources of other first responders) can quickly be overwhelmed. In the case of a COVID-19 pandemic, police agencies are likely to face the additional burden of operating with a reduced workforce, as some of their own officers may become sick or require isolation after being exposed to infected persons. A key part of the jurisdiction-wide planning for a COVID-19 pandemic is to identify the priority² roles that only police, or other law enforcement agencies can take, and to find alternatives to police assistance where possible.

12. Use existing plans and incorporate only the new components that are needed during a COVID-19 pandemic. Planning for a COVID-19 pandemic can be very similar to planning for other types of critical incidents. While there are COVID-19 pandemic specific components that must be planned for (such as preventing disease transmission in the workplace), plans should be flexible and applicable to other types of public health emergencies. In many cases, the overall emergency planning structure is “modular.” Individual modules cover such topics as evacuation of urban areas, or how

mortuaries should plan to handle mass fatalities. Depending on the nature of an emergency, different modules can be taken off the shelf and implemented as they would be applicable to any event in which the police workforce is diminished.

13. Regularly update the plan. As new scientific information about COVID-19 becomes available or as situations or resources change, agencies should update their plans and make the new versions available to all personnel. Post agency information and news updates on your intranet or actual bulletin boards, which personnel are instructed to check daily at the beginning of their shifts.

14. Exercise the plan. Incorporate lessons learned and address components that need additional work. Provisions of a COVID-19 pandemic plan should be exercised to familiarize personnel with their roles and responsibilities and to identify areas that need additional work. Multi-agency testing of the plan will help identify any misconceptions about roles and responsibilities. Agencies should also incorporate lessons that they learn from exercises or actual uses of the plan.³

² Less critical functions could be put on hold or reduced. For example, in Santa Fe, Argentina, the governor relaxed the circulation measures during the quarantine, as the police is overburden by other more critical functions, until the response plan to COVID-19 pandemic of the Ministry of Interior is updated.

³ For example, Toronto incorporated the lessons learned from its experience with SARS into its current public health emergency/pandemic COVID-19 plan. London’s Metropolitan Police Service participated in several local and national exercises of the city’s plan and identified a few areas for further development, such as local handling of mass fatalities. London’s recent experience with the Polonium-210 poisoning of Alexander Litvinenko underscored the importance of obtaining accurate and reliable information about the nature of a public health threat and the risk to first responders.




EXTERNAL MEASURES


15. Reach out to subject matter experts for help in the process. As with other emergency planning efforts, COVID-19 pandemic planning should be a multi-disciplinary, multi-agency effort. Police planning officials should reach out to other subject matter experts who are involved in the jurisdiction's emergency planning, and engage them in the police department's education and planning efforts. Jurisdiction-wide planning efforts will need to involve public health and medical officials, who in turn will be able to help the police and other

law enforcement agencies educate themselves and develop their own plans.

16. Build on existing relationships. Police officials must identify local subject matter experts, such as public health or medical officials with whom the police agency interacts on a routine basis: either in-house medical professionals or external public health officials as early as possible in the planning process.

17. Identify relevant public health laws and authorities. Police agency personnel need to become familiar with the relevant public health laws governing any response to a COVID-19 pandemic, such as the laws that specify who has

 **Mutual respect and upholding human rights must be our compass in navigating this crisis** *António*

Guterres, UN Secretary-General, April 2020 

the authority to declare a public health emergency, and any laws that give policing agencies special powers during this time. A good understanding of the role of police and other law enforcement in enforcing public health orders will help policing agencies know what will be expected of them in enforcing quarantines and other sensitive matters. Police agencies may look to local public health officials for assistance in identifying relevant laws and regulations and in determining how this information will be incorporated into their internal COVID-19 pandemic response plans and training efforts, as well as in multi-agency efforts.

18. Include other local criminal justice entities in the planning efforts. Recognize that the functioning of other components of the justice system, such as courts, correctional agencies, and other law enforcement agencies, will likely be impaired during the pandemic. Work with other local criminal justice entities to determine how each agency's plans may overlap and affect those of other criminal justice sectors.



19. Ensure that responses to the pandemic are proportionate, necessary and non-discriminatory. Noting the precautionary measures recommended by the WHO, and given that national police and other law enforcement agencies will need to continue to address not only matters of public safety, but also those related to public health concerns before, during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, police, other law enforcement entities, their relevant ministries and judicial authorities therefore should consider whether it is possible to limit arrests and/or detentions temporarily to only those offenses which pose an immediate threat to the community in order to reduce pressure on places of detention and prisons⁴ during this period. The police should ensure that needs and requirements of women in custody are provided.

⁴ For more information on measures to be taken in prisons and detention facilities, please refer to: Preparedness, prevention and control of COVID-19 in prisons and other places of detention, WHO, Interim guidance, 15 March 2020, available on http://www.euro.who.int/_data/assets/pdf_file/0019/434026/Preparedness-prevention-and-control-of-COVID-19-in-prisons.pdf?ua=1; and COVID-19 Preparedness and Response in Places of Detention: Information Package, DPO/OROLSI/JCS and UNITAR, 2020, available on <https://unitar.org/learning-solutions/publications/covid-19-preparedness-and-response-places-detention-information-package>.

20. At the same time, they should expect likely to see an increase in the calls for service owing to the conditions surrounding the response to COVID-19 pandemic:

- a) Domestic violence / SGBV;
- b) Inter-community violence, xenophobia and hate crime;
- c) Prejudice and violence against those suspected of having COVID-19 as well as foreigners / specific minorities / refugees and other newly vulnerable groups;
- d) Trafficking and smuggling of people because of the increasing isolation of migrants and other types of vulnerable and marginalized populations;
- e) Counterfeiting of medicines and medical goods; and
- f) Civil unrest focused at medical treatment centres, food outlets and distribution centres, warehouses containing and suspected to contain in-demand items, and other critical infrastructure.

21. Develop a public communication strategy in advance. Work with public health officials to develop messages and strategies for communicating risks to the community. Communications should include accurate and timely information and should follow responsible risk communication guidelines that will reduce unnecessary fear and panic as well as unwarranted, but opportunistic blame for the pandemic being directed at the more vulnerable sections of society. Messages should be very clear in explaining the threat, providing guidance on what the public should do in the event of an emergency, and emphasizing the importance and direct benefit to the

 **The Pandemic has also led to a horrifying increase in violence against women** *António Guterres, UN Secretary-General, April 2020* 

community and its healthy system of voluntary compliance with public health orders (such as self-quarantine and “social distancing” measures that are designed to prevent the congregation of people in movie theatres, churches, nightclubs, or other confined spaces where contagion is likely). It may be beneficial for the police agency to communicate in concrete terms on their on-going enforcement activities, e.g. on number of checkpoints established, people stopped, fines issued, and more serious charges invoked etc. to ‘further encourage’ compliance.

22. Police and other law enforcement personnel should be well versed in how to describe the COVID-19 pandemic threat and the importance of voluntary compliance for oneself and the benefit of the community and the local health-care system, so they can improve public understanding in all of their contacts with members of the community. Some agencies recommend additional training for key spokespersons on the issue



INTERNAL MEASURES

23. Be strategic in determining how staffing losses may impact the functioning of the department. Work with each unit in the agency to identify its core functions and think about how the activities required to perform those core functions would be affected during a COVID-19 pandemic. Also consider what outside services and resources the agency depends on for carrying out these activities and

ensure that those services and resources will be available. Identify police activities that can be suspended if necessary and decide at what point each activity would be curtailed as a pandemic worsened.

24. Look for alternative ways to accomplish the functions that are critical and must be

maintained—for example, through use of technology and teleworking/commuting. Develop strategies for informing the public about the suspension of non-critical police and other law enforcement duties.

25. Identify the key skills needed to maintain critical functions, and cross-train personnel to provide backup. For critical functions, look for ways to cross-train additional employees to be able to perform these functions if necessary. Identify the special skills required to carry out the critical department functions—especially tasks carried out by small, highly specialized units—and then identify other personnel or volunteers in the department who possess these skills or could be trained in them. Consider utilizing pre-existing databases that contain the names of employees with particular skills, such as training in disarming bombs to fluency in languages, motor vehicle repair skills, and the ability to drive heavy trucks. These staffers could be called on during an emergency to use their secondary or additional skills to perform functions they might not usually perform.

26. Plan for sustaining police and other law enforcement operations with minimum staffing over the long term.

It may become difficult for agencies to sustain operations—even those that are given the highest priority—for very long. Within a matter of weeks, an agency could find itself operating with half of its normal workforce. Officials need to consider how to supplement the department’s workforce, for example by using pre-existing networks of volunteers. Also be aware of the need to prevent burnout and fatigue among the employees who do not

 **Healthcare providers and police are overwhelmed and understaffed** *António Guterres, UN Secretary-General, April 2020* 

become sick, some of whom may try to work many additional hours to help maintain the agency’s critical functions. Therefore, resist moving to 12-hour shifts for as long as possible to prevent employee fatigue.

27. Build on processes that are already internalized within the agency. “Ramping up” operations in response to large events—and subsequently scaling back—is a common practice for police agencies. As more agencies adopt Comp-Stat or other systems that involve strategically redeploying resources, such changes are becoming ingrained in the daily operating culture of policing. Planning for a pandemic can build on these basic principles. However, it is important to note that there are some agency functions that traditionally have not needed to ramp up or down to any great extent, such as administrative functions and buildings maintenance. Those units may need additional training to become familiar with the concepts of scaling back operations.

28. Begin agency education efforts as soon as possible. An educated workforce will better understand the COVID-19 pandemic threat. That will help reduce fear and ensure that if a

COVID-19 pandemic begins, employees will adhere to good hygiene recommendations that could significantly dampen the spread of the illness. Many educational resources already developed by national health agencies may be easily incorporated into your agency's educational efforts. Educate employees about how new plans and policies fit within the existing emergency operations framework. Plans also need to ensure that timely and accurate information will be provided to agency personnel during a COVID-19 pandemic. The degree to which employees understand the COVID-19 pandemic will affect the impact of the pandemic on the agency's workforce, and how well it is able to communicate information about the threat and manage fear during interactions with the public.

29. Communicate regularly throughout the planning process (both internally and externally).

Ongoing communications are imperative to maintaining momentum in the planning process and to ensuring a coordinated response. Police agency officials should endeavour to obtain feedback from agency personnel and meet regularly with others involved in the local process, to review the plan and update each other on new planning efforts. For example, use regularly scheduled meetings to facilitate continued discussion of the COVID-19 pandemic plan at the highest levels of authority.

30. Use technology as a force multiplier. Be creative in identifying ways in which technology may assist during an emergency. Jurisdictions that have a capacity for "teleworking" or "telecommuting"—allowing employees to

access computer databases from remote locations, including home—should consider how they could use that capacity during a COVID-19 pandemic without compromising critical databases. Other strategic uses of technology, such as enabling residents to report nonviolent crimes via the internet or setting up special hotlines or telephone reporting units, can lessen the demand on police personnel during a COVID-19 pandemic or other critical incidents.

31. Carefully consider the amount and type of personal protective equipment (PPE) and emergency supplies needed and consider staggered purchases so that equipment with a limited shelf-life will not expire all at once.

Police agencies' health planning officials need to work with other government and law enforcement agencies to determine what types of PPE are being stockpiled locally and what the agency should consider stockpiling on its own. Planning officials should carefully determine what is reasonable to stockpile, in light of the anticipated need for various products and the fact that some products have a limited shelf-life. This should be done with the assistance of the occupational health department and/or within the state's own guidelines. When stockpiling PPE, it is recommended to make staggered purchases to avoid a "lump sum" investment in PPE that will all expire at the same time (thus requiring another lump-sum investment to maintain the stockpile). Also, carefully consider which types of PPE should remain in a central location and which should be immediately disseminated to personnel. Immediate dissemination of large quantities of PPE may result in undue concern and misuse (or

unnecessary use) of the equipment and will deplete the supply. And some types of PPE can deteriorate if left in the trunk of a police vehicle, for example.⁵ Agencies may consider setting up priority agreements with vendors to supply additional resources on an as-needed basis.

32. Review leave policies that may encourage staff to report to work when sick or possibly exposed. Police and other law enforcement officials should review current sick-leave and family-leave policies to ensure that staff who are infected or who may have been exposed to the disease will not report to work. Officials in the studied sites noted that infected employees who report to work can do more harm than good if they infect other personnel. Quarantined staff who have had an on-the-job exposure to the COVID-19 virus need to be compensated as if they were “on duty” during their regularly scheduled shifts. This will encourage officers to report possible exposures and to comply with quarantine orders. However, such policies need to be written carefully in order to avoid encouraging excessive absences.

33. Consider making recommendations that staff can share with family members (i.e., create a family plan). Protecting the families of police agency personnel is critical to the continuity of police operations. Including “family plans” in a COVID-19 pandemic plan can

help ensure that the greatest number of staff possible will report for duty. With this in mind, agencies are encouraged to provide a list of recommended items for families to stockpile; such as water, canned food, antiseptic, and gloves. Gender specific assistance should be put in place for staff who have critical situation at home or have lost their traditional support during the pandemic.

CONCLUSION

34. Experiences underscore the need to approach the planning process systematically and logically, beginning with a thorough understanding of the issue. Lessons identified indicate that agency officials should focus on developing a flexible plan that builds on current public health recommendations specific to a COVID-19 pandemic. Engaging and educating the agency, as well as incorporating existing multi-agency planning and emergency response efforts into the plan, will assist in the agency’s preparation process. As one official noted, “The planning process is just as important as the outcome—you have to go through the educational process of understanding the risk and thinking through the issues to truly understand the impact. Then, you (as an agency) are able to break it down to its most simple elements.

⁵ See, for example, <https://nij.ojp.gov/library/publications/guide-selection-personal-protective-equipment-emergency-first-responders-nij>, *Guide for the Selection of Personal Protection Equipment for Emergency First Responders*, NIJ Guide 102-00, November 2002.



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ANNEXES

Annex 1: COVID – 19 - Potential Criminal Threats

Annex 2: Preventing Exposure

Annex 3: Operational Procedures to follow when allowing visitors to police premises

Annex 4: Human Rights and policing during a COVID-19 pandemic

Annex 5: COVID-19 gender responsive policing

Annex 1: COVID – 19 - Potential Criminal Threats

The following are some areas most likely to see an increase in the calls for service owing to the conditions surrounding the response to COVID-19 pandemic:

- Domestic violence / SGBV;
- Intercommunity violence;
- Prejudice and violence against those suspected of having COVID-19 as well as foreigners / specific minorities / refugees and other newly vulnerable groups;
- Trafficking and smuggling of people;
- Counterfeiting of medicines and medical goods;
- Civil unrest focused at medical treatment centres, food outlets and distribution centres, warehouses containing and suspected to contain in-demand items, and other critical infrastructure;
- Corruption and misappropriation of public resources;
- Cybercrime;
- Etc.

These areas as well as additional ones may benefit from more detailed specific guidance, Therefore, police agencies are encouraged to contact the following persons with their specific thematic guidance requests:

- i) **Sofiene Bacha**, Policy Specialist, Rule of Law, Security & Human Rights Team for Sustainable Peace and Development, Crisis Bureau, UNDP (sofiene.bacha@undp.org)
- ii) **Andrew Carpenter**, Chief – Strategic Policy and Development Section; Police Division, Department of Peace Operations (carpentera@un.org)

Annex 2: Preventing Exposure

1. If you are sick but not sure, notify your supervisor, stay at home, and do not come to work. Consult with a doctor or certified medical service for diagnosing and advices, and present to your supervisor for further assessment and instruction.
2. On your way to the police installation: wear a disposable surgical mask in case of using mass transport/ sharing vehicle with others. At the entrance, a temperature checkpoint setup by the Mission, should be used by both officers and visitors. Those exceeding 38C (100F) should not enter.
3. Practice proper hand hygiene. Wash your hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds (“Happy Birthday” song sang twice). If soap and water are not readily available use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
4. Avoid touching your face, to avoid unintentional transmission.
5. Thoroughly cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces using appropriate detergent/disinfectant solutions or wipes, including workstations, vehicles, and surroundings.
6. Maintaining good health, getting enough rest, maintain a moderate exercise programme, eating healthfully, avoiding tobacco use, etc.
7. Keeping current on vaccinations.
8. When interacting with any other individual including a member of the public exhibiting upper respiratory symptoms (sneezing, coughing), provide them a P-100 or N-95 mask if one is available, or stand 2 metre / 6 feet away.
9. All police officers must be provided with proper Personnel Protective Equipment (PPE). Where such PPE is in limited supply, those on operational duties or require contact with others, shall be prioritized.
10. In the case of interacting with members of the public suspected of having COVID-19, proper PPE is:
 - a) P-100 or N-95 masks
 - b) Eye protection (safety goggles or face shield)
 - c) Nitrile/latex/rubber gloves

Annex 3: Operational Procedures to follow when allowing visitors to police premises

1. All visitors must be considered as potentially affected by COVID 19 therefore all preventive measures must be taken accordingly. Nevertheless, full respect of human rights principles shall always be considered.
2. Visitors should be allowed to visit only specific areas identified within the police premises, preferably one office just dedicated for such purpose. Such area must be disinfected and cleaned frequently, ideally after each visit, at least surfaces touched by visitors should be cleaned and disinfected after each visit.
3. A dedicated and isolated waiting area should be identified in case that more visitors are present at the same time, such area should meet all the general requirements to prevent the contamination of the virus.
4. Any interaction with Police personnel and others should occur only in the designated area;
5. Each visitor before entering the premises should be provided with a surgical mask to wear during the entire presence in the premises and interaction with police officers and other persons
6. Procedures must be identified for the disposal of surgical masks provided to the visitors;
7. All Police personnel must wear PPE during the entire interaction with visitors;
8. It is a command responsibility to ensure that all police personnel and civilians working for police inside the premises receive proper and regular training on these operational procedures.

Annex 4: Human Rights and policing during a COVID-19 pandemic

In addition to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the socio-economic rights, the right to health and the right to free movement, police should be aware of human rights violations that can occur when performing their duties of protecting the population, during the pandemic.

In fact, The COVID-19 pandemic impacts and will continue to impact negatively the democratic space and the governance in many countries all over the world.⁶ Decision making is switching more and more to security and military response. Considering that defence and security institutions lack oversight mechanisms in many countries, particularly in conflict and crisis contexts, this will deepen the corruption problems and bring new ones linked to the emergency measures enforcement by the security services.

Also, if policing emergency orders and laws is done in a too militaristic and violent way, with no respect to transparency and accountability principles, it can result in a public mistrust towards the government and the police and permanently damage their reputation. For example, if the curfew is not enforced in a transparent and fair manner, the population will resist not only to the curfew, but also to other government decisions, including health-related measures.

In conflict and fragile context, where the legitimacy of the government is contested and/or community tensions are prevalent, the role of non-state actors is strengthened during the pandemic and enforcing emergency orders by the police could be considered as illegitimate by the local population, leading to community resistance and heavy police response.

To combat and prevent COVID-19 pandemic, several states are turning to Artificial Intelligence (AI) and big data technologies without clear and strong consideration to privacy. Algorithms that blindly process tracking and other personal information can lead to the stigmatization of certain vulnerable groups. Police is often part of the monitoring of the behaviour and movements of individual. In a normal situation, police monitoring systems and databases are generally used under a strict legal framework and with a strong oversight from the judiciary. Emergency situations often give extraordinary competencies to the government to use these databases without enough oversight and regulations procedures. Despite that data protection cannot be an obstacle to saving lives, it is important that the decision made according to these algorithms will not impact the human rights and do not discriminate any group or community. The use of personal data by police should be legitimized and exclusively for public-health specific aims. All collected personal data should be destroyed once the algorithms under COVID-19 are abolished.

⁶ <https://carnegieendowment.org/2020/04/06/how-will-coronavirus-reshape-democracy-and-governance-globally-pub-81470>.

Annex 5: Gender responsive policing during a COVID-19 pandemic

The police should take measures to meet the specific needs of women, children and men during a COVID-19 pandemic:

- Understand the differential needs and risks with respect to men and women;
- Special attention must be paid to women in detention cells. The police should ensure that women in custody are treated in a manner that ensures that their needs and requirements are provided;
- Participation, inclusion & access to information and share protection information with vulnerable and marginalized groups, including women;
- Team up with women-led protection networks;
- Consideration of mechanism to address the rise of SGBV and children abuse as the confinement is prolonged, including allowing the displacement of the victim to the specialized investigation unit (if any) during the curfew. During the state of emergency and limited functioning of judicial bodies, coordination with the judiciary and other state and non-state organizations is important to ensure the protection of the victims until the reopening of the courts.

POLICE PLANNING DURING A COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Police Division
United Nations Department of Peace Operations

Crisis Bureau
United Nations Development Programme

